FBI WASH DC

FBI MEMPHIS

413PM URGENT 3/29/68 CAF

TO DIRECTOR ATTN: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR W. C. SULLIVAN

FROM MEMPHIS (157-1092) 3P

SANITATION WORKERS STRIKE, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE, RM.

RE MEMPHIS TEL CALL TO ASSISTANT DIRECTOR W. C. SULLIVAN.

AT TIME INCIDENTS BEGAN IN MARCH HELD IN MEMPHIS, MARCH TWENTYEIGHT, SIXTYEIGHT, MARTIN LUTHER KING, AT HEAD OF MARCH, WAS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID, "I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE." THIS STATEMENT FURNISHED BY LT. ARKIN OF MEMPHIS PD, WHO ALSO ADVISED KING WAS OBVIOUSLY SCARED.

FURTHER DETAILS AS TO INCIDENTS AT START OF MARCH SECURED FROM LT. M. E. NICHOLS OF MEMPHIS PD WHO WAS IN VICINITY AND OBSERVED ACTIVITIES. HE REPORTED DR. KING MADE NO EFFORT TO QUIET MOB AND HIS ONLY CONCERN WAS TO RUN AND PROTECT HIMSELF. LT. NICHOLS HAS ADVISED THAT DR. KING, RALPH ABERNATHY, BERNARD LEE [redacted] AND TWO OTHER NEGRO MALES UNKNOWN TO HIM WERE AT HEAD OF MARCH [redacted] WHEN TROUBLE BEGAN, THIS GROUP TRIED TO COMMANDEER A WHITE PANEL [redacted] TRUCK TO GET THEM AWAY FROM MARCH. DRIVER OF TRUCK REFUSED TO [redacted] HELP. A WHITE PONTIAC WHICH WAS OCCUPIED BY TWO NEGRO FEMALES FOLLOWED THE PANEL TRUCK IN THE CROSS TRAFFIC. ONE OF KING'S

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section 3

AIDES MANAGED TO STOP PONTIAC. AIDE ASKED IF THE WOMEN WOULD ASSIST IN GETTING DR. KING OUT OF DANGER. THE WOMEN AGREED. THEREAFTER, ONE OF KING'S AIDES SLID BEHIND STEERING WHEEL. THE OTHER FOUR NEGRO MALES, INCLUDING DR. KING, GOT IN REAR SEAT OF PONTIAC. CAR WAS DRIVEN TO BEALE AND FRONT STREET, AT WHICH POINT IT WAS SURROUNDED BY ABOUT FIFTY INDIVIDUALS CONSISTING OF NEGROES AND NEWS REPRESENTATIVES. LT. NICHOLS, WHO WAS ON MOTORCYCLE, CLEARED CROWD FROM AROUND PONTIAC AND ASKED DRIVER OF PONTIAC WHERE HE WAS GOING. DRIVER SAID HE HAD DR. KING IN BACK SEAT AND HE HAD TO GET AWAY. THE OFFICER WAS ASKED TO ESCORT THEM TO HOTEL SHERATON PEABODY. LT. NICHOLS EXPLANED THAT DUE TO RIOTING THEY COULD NOT GET TO SHERATON PEABODY AND ASKED IF THEY WANTED TO GO TO ANOTHER PLACE. THE NEGRO DRIVER ASKED JUST TO GET THEM AWAY FROM TROUBLE.

LT. NICHOLS THEN ESCORTED THEM TO RIVERMONT MOTEL. LT. NICHOLS WENT TO DESK CLERK AND ASKED IF SHE HAD SPACE FOR FIVE NEGROES INCLUDING DR. KING. THE DESK CLERK TOLD LT. NICHOLS THE NEGROES COULD REMAIN IN THE LOBBY AND EFFORT WOULD BE MADE TO OBTAIN ROOM FOR THEM. AFTER THE FIVE NEGROES, INCLUDING DR.

KING LEFT THE PONTIAC, THE TWO NEGRO FEMALES DROVE ON. LT. NICHOLS DID NOT OBTAIN NAMES OF THESE TWO FEMALES AND FEELS CERTAIN THEY HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH DR. KING AND WERE NOT A PART OF DR. KING'S PARTY. LT. NICHOLS STAYED AT THE RIVERMONT HOTEL AND KNOWS THE TWO FEMALE OCCUPANTS OF THIS CAR DID NOT RETURN TO THE RIVERMONT WHILE HE WAS THERE.

INTERESTING OBSERVATION MADE BY MEMPHIS OFFICE IN THAT DR. KING IN HIS ROLE AS LEADER AT MOMENT OF DISTURBANCE AND TROUBLE WAS PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN PRESERVATION OF HIMSELF AND MADE NO EFFORT TO QUIET GROUP THAT WAS FOLLOWING HIS LEADERSHIP. SOMEWHAT INCONSISTENT WITH STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM DURING TALK THAT THE BLACK MAN SHOULD SUPPORT HIS OWN BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS, DR. KING FIRST SOUGHT RESIDENCE AT SHERATON PEABODY AND ENDED UP STAYING AT RIVERMONT HOTEL, WHICH IS PART OF HOLIDAY INN CHAIN. IN PAST HE HAS STAYED AT THE LORRAINE MOTEL, WHICH IS A QUALITY NEGRO MOTEL, MEMPHIS.

DR. KING, ACCOMPANIED BY RALPH D. ABERNATHY AND BERNARD LEE, DEPARTED MEMPHIS BY EASTERN AIRLINES APPROXIMATELY THREE TWENTY PM THIS DATE. DESTINATION ATLANTA. ATLANTA ADVISED TELEPHONICALLY.

END

LCC

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